



City of San Marcos

630 E. Hopkins
San Marcos, Texas 78666

NEWS

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Melissa Millecam, Director of Communications/ Intergovernmental Relations
512.393.8105 mmillecam@sanmarcostx.gov

City Begins Budget Process with Strategic Goals, Hiring Review

The City of San Marcos has begun preparing for the 2011-2012 municipal budget using a detailed evaluation process based on five strategic initiatives recently adopted by the City Council.

As part of the process, in early February City Manager Jim Nuse implemented a managed hiring program in which each staff opening is being reviewed by a vacancy review team before it is filled.

“This is not a hiring freeze, but we will take a close look at whether we need to fill each opening,” Nuse said. “Staff is taking a hard look at all aspects of the City budget and operations, including hiring, capital projects, City indebtedness, and the basic functions provided by City government. We are using a variety of tools to establish our priorities based on the City Council’s goals.”

The City Council adopted five strategic initiatives on March 1 following a retreat held in January. The five goals are:

- Sound Finances
- Customer Friendly Processes
- Big Picture Infrastructure
- Maintain and Protect San Marcos River
- Community Wellness/ Strengthen the Middle Class

Nuse is continuing a round of presentations to City departments and community groups to discuss the City’s goals and the strategies that are being used to implement them.

“We have developed a strategic calendar that lays out the highest priority activities for the next quarter and it is updated regularly,” Nuse said.

“Our departments and divisions are sharing a detailed ‘functional analysis’ that takes a close look at what we do, why we do it, and how we might do it better and more efficiently. Also, we will undergo a quarterly review of our progress at leadership forums held in public session with the City Council,” he added.

The departmental assessments detail the mission, organization, budget allocations, and functions by each division. In addition, the review notes whether each task is legally required, a core operation, or enhances the performance of the department.

The analyses cover service history and demand levels, opportunities to privatize some operations, staff flexibility and cross-training, things that the department should be doing, and services that could be reduced or eliminated.

The City also recently conducted a community survey through ETC Institute, a national research company. ETC is scheduled to report on the results of the survey at the City Council's March 24 meeting.

Some 400 randomly selected participants were asked to rate the quality of city services, how safe they feel, perceptions of the City of San Marcos and their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with services.

City department heads have also been evaluating capital improvement projects for major infrastructure investments to set priorities and evaluate scheduling of projects.

"We want to avoid issuing any debt this year for capital projects as we strive to address the City Council's top priority on sound finances," Nuse explained.

The City Council will hold a budget policy workshop on April 1 to review a three to five year financial plan and lay the groundwork for the 2011-2012 city budget.

Staff will prepare a budget proposal for review and consideration by the City Council in the summer and for adoption in September. The budget year runs from October 1 through September 30 each year.

(Note: Future stories will cover the results of the community survey, the Budget Policy workshop, (including budget goals, Capital Improvements Program and a 3-5 year financial plan), the department functional analyses, the budget process and City Council's quarterly Leadership Forums evaluating City progress.)

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